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Marsh, G. P.

Speech... on the tariff bill
delivered in House of Rep.

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**SPEECH OF MR. GEORGE P. MARSH, OF VERMONT,
ON THE TARIFF BILL.**

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE U. STATES, APRIL 30, 1844.

The House being in Committee of the Whole, on the bill reported by Mr. McKAY, from the Committee of Ways and Means, to modify and amend the Tariff law of 1842—

MR. MARSH, of Vermont, addressed the committee as follows:

We have cause, Mr. Chairman, to congratulate the House and the country upon the temper in which this debate has been in general conducted. The gentlemen who have participated in it have confined themselves more closely than is usual to the real question at issue. They have maintained their respective positions with a cool earnestness and a tone indicative of honest difference of opinion, and no discussion of the session has called forth greater ability or exhibited more successful labor of preparation.

The controversy is indeed momentous—momentous both in its direct bearing on all the great interests of the American people, and because it has already become the means of determining conclusively a point of no small importance, and hitherto much disputed. It has been asserted at the North, with confident vehemence, that this is no party but sectional issue; and that the Democrats of the eastern and middle States are as staunch supporters of the doctrine of legislative protection of domestic industry as their political opponents. But the authoritative exposition of the views of the party in the majority in this House, from the Committee of Ways and Means, settles this question forever. Hostility to the principle of *designed* protection, whether direct or incidental, is openly avowed, and spite of the disclaimers of rebellious individuals, it must hereafter be regarded as an established article of faith in the creed of the party assuming to be emphatically Democratic. It is no longer the question, whether the dominant party on this floor is or is not friendly to the industrial interests of their country, but whether certain of its refractory members can be constrained by the force of political discipline to bow the knee, and prefer the supremacy of their party to their own solemn convictions of what belongs to their country's good. It is a test of the stringency of party organization; and if, with a majority of more than two-thirds, you fail to pass this bill, you will apply a new proof of what the world already more than half suspects, that at the wand of the magician is broken, and that the spell hath lost its power to charm. American industry will begin to feel that it rests upon a surer basis than the shifting sands of party ascendancy, and the fundamental policy of our country will come to be regarded as, for a time at least, *res judicata*. We of the North shall cease to fear that the precious South, having now outgrown the need of that protection which has done its office for her great staple, will a second time be able to subvert the course of our trade, and change the occupations of our laboring community.

It has been made matter of boast that the citizens of a certain southern State, which has been at different periods within one generation most

conspicuous on both sides of this great question, are the French of America. Gallant they may be, and, for aught I know, gallant also as Frenchmen; but if we award them this praise, they must pardon us for hinting that they are also, like the French, *un peu volages*, somewhat fickle. Fickleness, in a certain sex, and under certain circumstances, may be even graceful, but in legislators and statesmen it is, at best, but an equivocal attribute; and the people of the South must even bear with our more phlegmatic tempers, if we now relish the diet they prescribed for us, and persist in acknowledging the value of doctrines which we first imbibed from their superior wisdom.

That this is a question upon which sectional interests and sectional feeling have a very strong bearing I am not disposed to deny. Nor do I pretend that I can divest myself of their influence. Sir, I should be ashamed if I could. I dare not assume to be above the partialities which belong to humanity; and were I insensible to such considerations I should be beneath them. I cannot, nay, sir, I will not, shut my eyes to the interests, the claims, of my own region, of my own humble State. While I conscientiously believe that the policy of protection is demanded by the best interests of all her sisters, to her I know it is vital; and so deeply rooted is this conviction among those whom I, with my colleagues, have the honor to represent, that the very agitation of this question—a question supposed to have been settled by the great contest of 1840, when the nation, with unparalleled unanimity, pronounced upon it in a voice of thunder—has already produced a panic, whose influence upon the price of our only staple will cost the wool growers of Vermont not less than half a million.

We of the extreme North, Mr. Chairman, are obliged to contend with physical difficulties to which the more favored South and West are strangers. Our territory is mountainous—our soil rugged and comparatively unthankful. The bushel of corn, which the labor of minutes produces for the western farmer, costs us the toil of hours. Our climate is of even fearful severity; the thermometer rises to ninety-five degrees above zero, and falls to the congealing point of mercury. In summer we swelter under the sun of the tropics, in winter we shiver amid Siberian snows. Even now, while *we* have been for weeks luxuriating beneath an Italian sky, my constituents are but just emerging from polar frosts, and even the broad bosom of our noble lake is scarcely yet free from its bonds of almost perennial ice. For a great portion of the year our highways are rendered almost impassable by drifted mountains of snow, or the alternate frosts and thaws of an early autumn and a tardy spring. Our summer seed time is not yet past when the south begins her harvest, and the plough is often frozen in the furrow before the winter grain can be committed to the earth. Yet such are the industry, the enterprise, the untameable energy of our hardy people, that, in spite of these accumulated difficulties and discouragements, Vermont stands, in point of production, as compared with population, if not first, very near the head of the list. But the wants of man and beast in so rude a climate are so much greater, and their variety of supply so much less, that almost the whole produce of the soil is required for domestic consumption, and little surplus is left for the purchase of necessaries of foreign growth. Domestic animals must be both fed and sheltered for half the year; and this involves not only time, labor, and direct expense to the farmer, but the outlay of costly ar-

rangements for storing and preserving the various articles of food required for the consumption of his stock. So the quantity and variety of clothing needful to meet the changing seasons, the greater necessity for nutritious and stimulating diet, the supply of fuel, expensive modes of building to ward off the rigors of winter, and to preserve for long periods a stock of vegetable food; all these impose additional burdens upon the farmer. On the other hand, his season of productive labor is short, the variety of his products narrow, and the obvious result is, that the diligent and persevering toil of summer scarcely suffices to accumulate a supply for the consumption of a long and unproductive winter. A few horses and cattle, a little of the produce of the dairy, a small and yearly decreasing quantity of lumber, and the fleeces of our sheep, are all we have to spare. It is upon these products that the northern farmer relies for the means to pay his taxes, educate his children, and give them a slender outfit when they abandon the paternal fireside, and commence their pilgrimage to the sunny South or the mighty West. Prostrate our manufactures, deprive us of this one resource, and you plunge us into absolute, hopeless, irretrievable ruin.

The subject, Mr. Chairman, is one of such vast comprehension and extent, it admits of such an infinite variety of argument and illustration, and involves such a mass of details, that not a single hour only, but days would be required for its adequate discussion; and I find myself enforced by the narrow limits prescribed by the parliamentary law of this House, either to content myself with presenting some very general considerations, or to confine myself to a very partial view of the question. I ought not to complain of the one hour rule, both because I voted for its adoption, and because in a deliberative assembly of two hundred members, all of whom aspire to be heard, while none is content to listen, the exuberance of eloquence must somehow be checked, and such a rule may be considered as a necessary evil. But for this evil, if such it be, there is a ready remedy by appealing to our Cæsar—the people—through the press; and it is happily no breach of privilege to print as a speech that which never was spoken. Moreover, gentlemen who want the stentorian power of lungs required to fill the echoing void of this vast Hall, may find consolation in the reflection, that the still small voice of the press will penetrate to nooks and corners where the tones of the speaker are never heard.

I shall, then, make no effort to compass an impossibility, by essaying a full discussion of the tariff question within the space of a single hour, and I shall limit myself to some remarks of a general character. I beg, however, not to be understood as undervaluing the importance of minute examination and precise detail. None could have listened to the instructive speech of the gentleman from Maryland, (Mr. WETHERED,) so replete with sound sense and practical knowledge, without being convinced of the value of such accurate statistics. But, sir, it has been my fortune to have had even a better instructor. I have been schooled in this matter by dear bought experience. Myself unhappily a manufacturer, I know too well the indispensable necessity of the most rigorous exactness in the calculation of the numerous elements of profit and loss. I have learned how disastrously an apparently insignificant change in the arrangement of duties may affect a large establishment, and that a trivial modification of the tariff, which shall not perceptibly vary the amount of revenue, and shall scarcely save a penny to any individual consumer, may work utter ruin to the manu-

H. H. S. 29, 108 Commerce, 16

facturing capitalist, and the hundreds who depend upon him. But, after all, this experimental knowledge makes me suspicious of the accuracy of statistical detail, and the reasonings founded on it, and I know not whether I have been more strongly moved to ridicule or to contempt, by the ignorant assumptions and the puerile calculations to which I have listened upon this floor.

Figures, it is said, cannot lie; but this aphorism, a mere truism in its proper sense, is in its popular use a mischievous falsehood. In the rage for what are called *facts* in this calculating age, it is astonishing how eagerly supposed facts and half truths are caught at, to the neglect of the most obvious principles; and how readily these facts, by a Procrustean process, are forced into accordance with preconceived theories. So far has this gone that it is time for reaction. Men are in danger of running into the contrary extreme of despising all statistical knowledge; and in all probability, "to lie like the multiplication table" will soon pass into a proverb.

In fact, the uncertainty of speculative estimates in matters of political economy is such, that we are authorized only to form general conclusions from *a priori* reasoning. We may infer, in general, that the protection of domestic industry is, or is not, advantageous to the interests of a nation; but it is impossible to determine, even approximately, the effect of a given duty upon either revenue or home production, otherwise than by experiment. But the interests involved in these questions are of such vast magnitude, that experiments are always in the highest degree dangerous; and when you have a tariff which satisfies at once the demands of the revenue, the producer, and the consumer, it is the very acme of madness to adventure upon extensive changes, except upon such cogent evidence as, in the nature of things, is hardly attainable. An alteration of the tariff, which shall add but a few thousands to the revenue may not improbably destroy a branch of business in which millions are invested. You may safely amend your tariff by the gradual and cautious change of the duties on single items, or narrow classes, but the sudden subversion of a complete system, a passage *per saltum* from protection to warfare, is an act of absolute political revolution.

Sir, as I have said, there is in the speculations of political economists a most remarkable uncertainty. The calculations of the keenest and most sagacious publicists have been more frequently disappointed than verified; and there is no branch of human knowledge in which the results of experience have so frequently and so flatly contradicted the theories of the closet. The causes which affect trade and manufactures are numerous, and oftentimes obscure; and the reciprocal actions of these causes upon each other, and upon commerce and industry, complicated as it is by unknown and ever changing influences, constitutes a problem harder of solution than that of the perturbations of the planets.

Were we without the light of experience, it would seem to be a very obvious truth, that you must increase the cost to the consumer of every imported article, by the amount of both the duty and the profit and commissions on the capital required to be advanced for the payment of the duty. But experience is to the contrary, and you can scarcely cite an instance in the history of any country, whose industry is unshackled and unrestricted by Government, where a protective duty has not been

speedily followed by an improvement in the quality, and a reduction in the price, of the articles protected; and of this you have had numerous illustrations in the course of this debate. The immediate effect of such duties seems in general to be a reduction in the price of the manufactured article at the place of production, the foreign manufacturer submitting to a diminution of his profits, for the sake of retaining the market. At the same moment, domestic establishments are growing up, and by the double competition of these with each other and the foreign producer, a further reduction of prices, accompanied by an improvement in quality, soon follows. Various causes concur to produce this improvement in the quality of American manufactures, besides the competition to which I have just alluded. The scrutinizing habits of the consumer, great mechanical ingenuity in the artisan, his better knowledge of the tastes and wants of his countrymen, and above all the readiness with which he seizes upon and appropriates every improvement in his art. In Europe, all changes are slow. New machines or mechanical combinations are for a long time used only in new establishments, and the fixed habits of the people, whether laborers or employers, render the introduction of new processes difficult and tardy. The American loves change for its own sake, and is keen in the appreciation of improvements; and a new machine is no sooner patented and tested, than the old process is abandoned, thrown aside, and supplanted by the new. The consequence is that every manufactory is, at all times, near the highest attained point of excellence, and there is an incessant struggle for precedence in the march of improvement.

It is extremely hazardous to argue from European precedents, and perhaps there is no country from whose condition it is more unsafe to draw conclusions than from that one which is, unhappily, almost the only one ever referred to in our debates, for the obvious reason that community of language, frequency and facility of intercourse, and the extent of our commercial relations with England make us more familiar with that country than with others, from which we might draw quite as valuable lessons of practical wisdom. The apparent analogies between our national character and institutions and those of England are so numerous and striking, as quite to conceal from the view of the superficial observer those less obvious but more deeply rooted and most important features in which they differ. Sir, in genius, habits, and condition, the American people, and I thank Heaven for it, are as diverse from the people of England, as they are from any Christian nation. Our most cherished and valued institutions are based on principles fundamentally opposite to those of the civil and political systems of England; and apart from community of speech and historical recollections, and those habits of thought which a similarity in the forms of language necessarily implies, we are a radically distinct people. We, sir, are the genuine representatives of that glorious race who overthrew the Stuart dynasty in the middle of the seventeenth century, and the principles of Cromwell and Milton, which have now become extinct in their native soil, and no longer mark the English character, flourish here in their full vigor. For these reasons, arguments from English practice are as inapplicable as if drawn from the policy of the Celestial Empire. There is, therefore, no force in that argument which would dissuade us from protecting our own industry,

because England, which protects hers, exhibits so fearful an amount of ignorance, pauperism, and crime. There is no parallel between the cases. You find the same abandoned vice, the same unenlightened ignorance, and the same abject poverty, in every European country cursed with a hereditary aristocracy, a law of primogeniture, an established church, and to crown all, a national debt of such magnitude as to weigh like a millstone about the neck of the people.

So vast is the public debt of England, that, for the payment of its interest alone, a population but once and a half as large as our own is taxed annually a sum equal to the total amount of the debt of all the American States; and in order that the burden may not fall too heavily on the rich, the entire body of lands, in which the poor have no direct interest, is taxed but five millions of dollars, while the other taxes, which press most heavily on the poor, amount to no less than fifty times that sum, or two hundred and fifty millions of dollars per annum. This is independent of tithes and church rates, parish charges, and the thousand other Government exactions, which crush the operative to the very dust. The British laborer is followed by the tax-gatherer from the cradle to the grave. His food, his physic, his fuel, his clothing, the implements of his trade, the humble furniture of his cottage, his windows, his chimneys, the very air and light, and even his shroud, all these are subject to direct taxation. His bread he divides with his temporal and spiritual lords, and the ruler takes the lion's share. His children are pinched and starved, that the younger sons of the aristocracy may be pensioned, and he toils, and shivers, and suffers, that the self-styled successors of the Apostles may roll in gilded chariots, and dwell in sumptuous palaces.

It is not, then, the protective system of England that oppresses her people; no, sir, on the contrary, it is that system, and that alone, which enables her laboring classes to bear up staggering under such a load as was never elsewhere laid upon the shoulders of humanity. Her protective system is not the burden, but it is the elastic spring which alone renders that burden supportable. Let England abandon that system, and adopt the insane doctrine of free trade, would her humble classes gain by the exchange? Admit that their bread stuffs might cost them less, would their taxes be lightened by the loss of a hundred millions in duties? Would their wages be raised, or their opportunities of employment be multiplied, by the destruction of her industrial establishments? Would other nations supply them with manufactured goods at cheaper rates than they obtain them now? Sir, it needs no *Œdipus* to answer such questions as these; and the man must be mad who traces the wretchedness of England's enslaved laborers to the protection of her industry, or supposes that their miseries would be relieved by its sacrifice.

Again, sir, the British statesman may confidently calculate, where the American can but hazard a guess. The extent and relative capacities of the agricultural and manufacturing interests are known with great exactness of detail, and the sudden extension, or essential modification of either is difficult, if not impracticable. Changes are slow; new manufactures will not spring up like Jonah's gourd in a single night; and capital is so abundant, that those already established will not be ruined or suspended on account of a trifling fluctuation in the demand for goods, or in the cost of the raw material. It is quite safe:

to assume, that my lord will not give up to cultivation so much of his forest as is required to breed a covey of partridges, barely to save from starvation some half a dozen families who pine for the bread which those few acres would yield. This would both curtail his lawful and laudable sports, and moreover injure the grain-growing interest by increasing the supply. Such destructive policy is not to be apprehended from the prudent and patriotic landholder, and the extension or modification of rural husbandry is very slowly and cautiously permitted.

It is, then, known what quantity of land will be cultivated, what grain, or pulse, or roots, will be grown from year to year, and the amount of produce is subject to no uncertainty but that of the seasons. So the manufacturing establishments are precisely gauged, and, though these are progressive in themselves, yet they may be regarded as stationary and constant when contrasted with our own ever changing industry. Unwearied pains are taken to ascertain the extent of demand for British goods abroad, and the quantity and probable cost of the supply of the raw material. With all these elements an approximate calculation may be made. The effects of a given policy may be to some extent foreseen, and the causes being known, it is safe to argue that like causes will produce like effects.

With us the picture is reversed. Our statistical details are loose, slovenly, and unreliable, not to say faithless, to the very extreme of inaccuracy. The modes and objects of our husbandry, and all our industrial employments, are incessantly fluctuating. New sources of production are opening every hour. The amount of any given article produced in one year scarcely furnishes ground for a plausible conjecture as to the quantity to be expected the next; and the most sagacious statesman must throw down his pen in despair, whenever he attempts to reduce his anticipations of the future to even approximate calculation.

I repeat then, sir, with us all experiment is but a leap in the dark. Let us be content with present prosperity, and suffer not ourselves to be bewildered by the fear of evils, which may be fancied but cannot be foreseen.

It is worthy of notice, while on this point, that, whatever the practice of England may be, the teachings of her popular writers tend to the very doctrines inculcated by this report. Authors are subsidized to manufacture free-trade theories for the foreign market, and large sums are raised to carry on this new missionary enterprise of disseminating through the world those doctrines of political economy which England is wise enough to repudiate at home.

England spares no pains to acquire an influence here. She aims to dictate our economical theories, our commercial system, our legislation. She commends herself to the North, by boasting of her achievements in the great cause of the abolition of human slavery; and to win favor at the South, she holds out the delusive hope that her influence will be thrown into the scale of universally free and unrestricted trade.

But, sir, are we never to be in fact, what near threescore and ten years ago our fathers declared us to be of right, independent of England? Have we, in that long space, learned nothing from our own experience, and is the utmost period of the life of man too short to teach anything to a nation? Are not the counsels of the wise and good, the dead and the living of our own land, sufficient for our gui-

dance? For me, sir, the examples and the teachings of our fathers suffice. I look for no instruction in the science of government to British writers at home, or to British renegades, or alienated Americans here; and I prefer the palpable prosperity that I can see and feel to the airy visions of the most persuasive theorist.

But it is time to look a little more closely at the bill under consideration, and to inquire into its real character and purposes. It is scarcely possible to cast a glance at it, without discovering that both its arguments and its facts are derived from sources unfriendly to American interests, and more disposed to color, distort, or suppress, than candidly to disclose the whole truth. You are hearing the arguments and assumptions of British importers from the mouths of American statesmen. The hostility of the bill to domestic labor is so thinly disguised, if, indeed, there be any attempt at concealment, that it seems a work of supererogation to point it out; but so far as the policy it inculcates can be referred to any intelligible principle, it is this: to make a show of protection to the raw material, by a slight reduction, or, as in the case of wool not grown in this country, a slight increase of the duties imposed by the existing law, and then to neutralize this protection, by admitting the manufactured article at a much lower rate. The manufacturer can be induced to purchase the raw material only by the hope of profit on the manufactured goods. But if you admit the goods at such rates that the foreign manufacturer can undersell him in our market, he will suspend his operations, and buy the raw material no longer. It avails nothing to the American producer to protect his wool by a duty of thirty per cent., if you admit woollen goods at the same, or a lower rate of duty. You destroy his market, by destroying the inducement of the domestic manufacturer to buy. This is too palpable to require any elucidation beyond the simple statement. Indeed, so unequivocally is the bill characterized by unrelenting hostility to American industry, that it in general reduces the duties imposed by the tariff of 1842 on foreign manufactures just in proportion to the amount of foreign labor expended upon them. This is a point of so great importance that I desire to draw to it the special attention of the Committee. By the tariff of 1842, the highest duties were imposed on those wares in which the value of the raw material bore the lowest proportion to the amount of the labor required for their fabrication, and so far the duty operated as a tax on foreign and a bounty upon domestic labor. The bill now under consideration proposes to abolish this just and salutary discrimination, and in effect to give a premium to the foreign laborer. Thus, the duty on raw silk is reduced three and a half per cent.; the duty on silk goods from five to forty per cent. The duty on iron four per cent., on manufactures of iron from four to one hundred and seven per cent. The duty on common wool, three cents per pound, on woollen goods from five to fifty-seven per cent. The duty on the simpler glass wares, one per cent.; if partially cut, sixty-two per cent.; if cut from one-third to one-half the length, one hundred and fifty-six per cent., and upon the larger sizes of crown glass two hundred and thirteen per cent. To what principle, but hostility to domestic labor, can we refer a system of duties which favors the admission of foreign wares, in proportion as their value has been increased by the employment of foreign capital and foreign labor?

The avowed principle of the bill, that, namely, of providing for

revenue alone, is not merely opposed to the doctrine of legislative protection—it goes beyond this, and wars directly upon those interests which most require protection. A revenue duty must be so framed as to invite importation. If you discourage the importation of a particular article, you diminish or destroy your revenue from it, and if you aim to draw the greatest amount of revenue from each description of goods, you must so regulate your tariff as to induce the greatest importation of those goods. This you can do only by giving the foreign producer a preference over the domestic in our own market. A revenue tariff, then, is such an arrangement of duties as will enable the foreign manufacturer to compete successfully with the native, and is consequently antagonistic, not only to that which is imposed for the specific purpose of protection, but to that more rational system so happily exemplified in the tariff of 1842, which, with singular felicity, combines increase of revenue with competent protection to most branches of domestic industry.

I am aware that northern democrats, in general, dare not openly avow hostility to home labor. Like the chief priests and scribes of old, they “fear the people,” and even profess friendship for the cause. But this bill comes from the democratic oracles. Soothsayers, of higher rank than the magi of *this* House, have been taken into council, and a mighty astrologer has pronounced upon the horoscope. Doubtless the report speaks the real sentiments of the party; and its policy is destined to be carried out, if the scattered and dispirited legions of the democracy can yet be rallied in sufficient strength to wrest the victory from the growing and gathering forces of “that army with banners,” which has already smitten them with panic terror. It is in vain to deny that the bill is both calculated and designed to overthrow the whole productive industry of our people; and the friendship of the self-styled democrat for the laborer is that of the Quaker skipper for the enemy’s captain who boarded his vessel. “Friend,” said Ichabod, flinging his brawny arms around him, “I will not hurt thee, but I presume thee can swim,” and, so saying, threw him overboard.

I do not propose to inquire into the constitutional power of Congress to legislate with a view to protection; for I have not observed that constitutional scruples oppose any very serious obstacles in gentlemen’s way, when a favorite project is to be carried. Besides, these scruples are particularly rife among the very same class of politicians who entertain no doubt of the right of this single House to exercise a power, in restricting the right of petition, which the express words of the Constitution deny to Congress, and who, in the case of the four recalcitrant States, maintained the power of the House of Representatives to nullify a solemn act of the national legislature, passed in strict conformity with the letter of the Constitution. Sir, I have no fear that gentlemen who swallowed those camels will ever be strangled by so small a gnat as this. The constitutional cholic, is indeed, a grievous complaint, oftentimes an excruciatingly painful disease, but, happily, it is never mortal. Gentlemen are frequently attacked by it, they sicken, they suffer. In the words of the law, they languish and languishingly do live, but die never. In the long rows of our departed predecessors, in yonder cemetery, you find the monuments of those who have fallen a prey to death in all his varied shapes. Gout, apoplexy, consumption, fever, and even the hand of violence, each hath

had its victims, but constitutional scruples, none. For such a disorder, it would seem superfluous to prescribe. Besides, the very *vis medicatrix* of nature sometimes originates milder forms of disease, by whose action the peccant humors of the system are carried off, and dangerous organic or chronic complaints are prevented or healed. Who knows but this constitutional malady may serve some like prophylactic or medicative purpose in our political system? These scruples are often of excellent use, by way of apology for voting with our party, and against the plainest reasons of general good, or the interests of our own constituents. Moreover, in debate, they are a good tub for the whale, and serve in a party siege to divert the attack from the weaker points, the salient angles, of the fortress. It would therefore be hardly fair, were it practicable, to deprive gentlemen of so convenient a retreat when pressed by arguments which they are unable to answer.

But however serious gentlemen may be in insisting on constitutional objections, it can hardly be expected that the country will now abandon as unconstitutional a system sanctioned by the very framers of the Constitution in the Congress of 1789, and approved by every President, from Washington down to the immortal successor of his own "illustrious predecessor," who has been, and is, on both sides of every supposable question but two—the abolition of slavery in this District, namely, and the expediency of the selection of a certain favorite son, a certain northern man with southern principles, who shall at present be nameless, as the next Democratic candidate for the Presidency. On the former of these points I believe he is committed; and I rather think there are gentlemen hereabouts, who, if they saw good cause, could tell how and why he became so. As to the other question, I have never understood that he entertained any hesitation, unless it may be a trifling doubt, whether the people, upon "sober second thought," would confirm the nomination which the convention *ought* to make; and whether they would not, under the influence of ancient prejudice or new delusion, reject the cashiered pilot who asks to be reinstated, and prefer rather a more experienced and trusty helmsman.

There are certain kinds and branches of industry which, as all men agree, lawfully may be, and as matter of expediency ought to be, protected. You secure to the author the copy-right in the coinage of his brain, and you guarantee to the inventor of a new process, or machine, the exclusive right to his invention against every competitor, whether native or foreign. Here is protection, in the odious form of an absolute monopoly; yet no man questions its justice or its expediency. I am well aware that, in the case of the celebrated cotton gin, southern chivalry thought fit practically to nullify the patent law, and to deny to the meritorious inventor all substantial reward for his valuable machine; but in general the policy of the law is approved.

[Mr. HOLMES here interposed, and observed, that South Carolina had purchased the right to the use of the cotton gin. And Mr. RHETT added, that the same State had afterwards made a voluntary grant of \$20,000 to the inventor. It was also suggested that North Carolina had acquired the right for the use of her citizens by fair purchase.]

Protection has, as I have before remarked, already done its work for the great staple of the south; and no man familiar with the history of manufactures, and particularly of mechanical invention, can doubt that legislative protection has been the indispensable condition of the great

prosperity and extended amount of the cotton trade. The encouragement early afforded to the growth and working of cotton, induced investments in this branch of manufacture, and it soon attained a considerable degree of importance. The mechanical ingenuity of this country, and of England, now began to exert a reciprocal influence. The admirable construction of our machinery, copied and improved from that of England, and the advantages enjoyed by our manufacturers in the abundance and cheapness of water-power, compelled the English to improve their spinning and weaving apparatus. This improvement reacted upon us, and, in like manner, led to new contrivances; and the whole process of converting cotton into cloths has been more than once completely revolutionized. The consequence has been a vastly facilitated and cheapened production of cotton goods, and of course a proportionally increased use of them. Cotton has, to a great extent, supplanted linen, which is more costly of production, and far less capable of elaboration by machinery. Cottons have also been largely substituted for woollens, in the shape of cotton flannels, and other thick fabrics; and they are interwoven with linen, with silk, with wool, with the fleece of the cashmere goat, and in fact with every textile substance. Cotton is used in vast quantities for batting and padding, for canvass, and innumerable other purposes, to which none thought of applying it until within the last few years. Hence there is a demand for this product almost without limit, and the planter both buys cheaper the manufactured article, and sells a vastly increased quantity of the raw material.

Such are the effects of protection; and I cannot forbear to notice in this connexion a remarkable instance of the interdependence between different branches of industry, and of the unforeseen collateral benefits which flow from this eminently wise and paternal system. The enlarged consumption, and wear of cotton goods, has proportionally increased the supply of rags for the paper maker, and the raw material for the most important of all manufactures—the handmaid of that art which is the conservator of all art and all knowledge—is furnished in inexhaustible abundance, and at greatly reduced cost. Illustrations of this sort might be multiplied without limit, for there exists between the various branches of productive industry the same common bond, which, according to an ancient philosophical orator, unites the entire body of the liberal arts into one harmonious whole.

But, sir, is not this very bill designed to protect a particular branch of capital and industry, and that at the sacrifice of all others? It is hinted that FOREIGN TRADE is largely interested in the overthrow of our protective system, and for that very trade protection is demanded. But in whose behalf is this protection asked, and for whose benefit are we called upon to sacrifice our own productive classes? We learn from unquestionable sources, that of the importations from Great Britain sixty-five per cent. is on British account. Of those from France, and other continental countries, not less than eighty-three per cent. is on foreign account; and of course nearly the whole profit on this enormous proportion of our trade goes into the hands of foreigners. Shall we legislate for the subjects of Great Britain and of France? Shall the foreign importer himself determine the duty which he will condescend to pay? Are his interests to be chiefly regarded in the legislation of this Hall? But were it otherwise—were the advantages of this great commerce the

proper gain of our own citizens—is this object of the promotion of foreign trade worth not only its present cost, but all the sacrifices which are asked for it? In 1836, all men abandoned their regular occupations, and set themselves to buy, sell, and get gain; and such was the neglect of agriculture, that even oats were imported from the banks of the Elbe to feed the horses that pastured in the valley of the Mohawk. The excessive trade of 1836 was followed by the convulsion of 1837, and there has been no lack of lectures from our Democratic brethren upon the causes of that convulsion. The crisis of 1837, said they, was not owing to the specie circular, to the removal of the deposits, to the refusal of the Government to recharter the United States Bank, to the multitude of State banks chartered by Democratic legislatures to fill the place of that dead monster, to the derangement, in fine, of the currency of the country by the action of Government. No, it was none of these things, nor the combined action of all these things, but it was the EXCESSIVE IMPORTATION—THE SPIRIT OF OVERTRADING—which caused all that ruin. Is then the spirit, which in 1836 was a spirit of darkness, now become an angel of light? If the foreign importations of 1836 involved the whole land in bankruptcy, ruin, and shame, is it now wise to stimulate importation to the highest extent to which legislation can carry it?

Again, sir, is not the maintenance, protection, and accommodation of this foreign trade one of the heaviest items in the cost of our national Government? To what other end do you maintain a navy, at the expense of six millions per annum, to display your protecting flag in every sea? For what other purpose are your foreign embassies, your costly custom-house establishment, and a vast proportion of your civil list? Sir, I argue not against these things as unnecessary, but to draw attention to the fact, that trade too has its protection, and to suggest the inquiry how much more we can afford to pay for its promotion.

Every gentleman who has studied the history of the origin of this Government, knows that the protection of property, as well as life and personal liberty, against both the violence and the policy of foreign powers, was the chief end sought to be attained by the establishment of the confederacy. The power of granting such protection as domestic industry requires, has been surrendered by the individual States, and unless it has lodged in the people of the Union, to be by them exercised, through us, their representatives, it is irrecoverably gone. The surrender is valid to pass the power out of the hands of the grantors, the States, but not good to vest it in Congress, the grantee. Strange anomaly—and yet to this *reductio ad absurdum* you are inevitably brought, if you deny the power of Congress to impose a protective duty. But if Congress may legislate for the protection of capital invested in trade, why not also for that of capital invested in manufactures? The buildings, the machinery, the stock, in its various stages of elaboration, the lands, whose value depends upon the successful employment of the capital thus invested, all these are property, as much as the stocks of the capitalist, the ships of the merchant, the lands of the planter, and, viewed simply as property, without regard to higher considerations of national policy, are just as much entitled to legislative favor and protection. The American capital invested in manufactures and the mechanic arts, is believed to amount to no less a sum than four hundred millions of dollars; and one-fourth of our population is dependent for

bread on the prosperity of those arts. To this vast sum, add the increased value of lands in the vicinity of flourishing manufactories, and you have an aggregate scarcely inferior to any of the items which make up the sum total of our national wealth.

Destroy the protective system, and you annihilate at a blow this great accumulation of wealth, this immense proportion of our national resources. In regard to the property invested in manufactures, it is to be observed, that the destruction involved by its sacrifice has no compensation. It is annihilation, not transfer. Thousands are impoverished, none are enriched. You make your country poorer, by the amount both of the capital directly invested, and the difference in value of the lands and other property affected. Let a flourishing factory spring up, with its capital of \$100,000, and it adds to the saleable value, and actual productiveness of the lands in its vicinity, at least as much more. Destroy it, and all this wealth has evaporated. In the case of the removal of public buildings, and the construction of works of internal improvement, there is often an apparent loss, which is, however, balanced by a compensation in the increased value thereby given to property elsewhere. Construct a canal, passing three miles from a flourishing country village, instead of through it. Its prosperity is destroyed. One by one, its most enterprising inhabitants desert it, and the aged and the poor alone are left. The cheerful din of its industry is hushed. The grass grows in the streets, its cottages are no longer the home of man, and the fox looks out at the window. Here is ruin, here is desolation—melancholy enough no doubt—but there is another side to the picture. On the banks of that canal there arises a new village, which, in its rapid growth and improvement, far outstrips all that the most sanguine fancy had ever hoped for its older rival. Here is indeed a destruction, but there is also a creation of wealth. It is a transfer, not an annihilation of prosperity, and though individuals may suffer, the sum total of national wealth is undiminished, and even increased. On the other hand, strike down a great branch of national industry, and where is your compensation? Do southern gentlemen imagine that the ruin of the manufacturers of Massachusetts will raise the price of cotton? Do the forgers of Pennsylvania hope to sell more iron, when the busy industry of New England shall be still, and the clang of the anvil and the hum of the wheel shall no more mingle with the roar of the waterfall? Does the western farmer suppose that he shall increase the price of his lands, or the profits of his husbandry, by compelling his eastern brethren to devote to the growing of grain and the feeding of cattle the millions of acres which they now occupy for sheep-walks, and for the cultivation of the teazel and other vegetable products required for the use of the manufacturer? New England is able abundantly to supply her own population with bread-stuffs and meats. Her soil, though inferior to the prairies of the West in fertility, is superior in variety. Sir, the West can produce nothing, absolutely nothing, which the soil of New England cannot also be made to yield in superfluous abundance. Even in fertility, the difference between the East and the West has been greatly exaggerated. Sir, on this subject I do not speak without book. I have seen the principal grain-growing States of the West in their harvest, and being practically familiar with agriculture, I claim to be able to judge of their productiveness. The western people, with all their virtues, and I accord them many, are a

little prone to talk in Eracles' vein; and I have heard on the prairies some gasconading about crops, which would have done no dishonor to Ancient Pistol. We of the East, as manufacturers and shepherds, are, to some extent, dependent on you of the West. Destroy our industry, compel us to exchange the loom for the plough, the sheep for the ox, turn us from consumers into producers, and you have lost your best customer—we buy of you no longer. Of the forty millions of the produce of other States which Massachusetts consumes, she will require not a dollar. Add to this the supplies demanded for the manufactures of other States, and you have not less than one hundred millions of American produce, for which a market will no longer exist. Where do you look for compensation for this loss? You have not the smallest reason to expect that the British corn laws will be repealed—no other European nation will take your produce, and when you are ready to sell, none will be found to buy.

Let the western farmer examine this bill, and calculate the saving which he supposes he would make by the operation of this anti-labor tariff. How many dollars would he save on his cloths, how many on his ironware, how many on his glass, his groceries, and other imported goods? Even admitting the truth of the false principle assumed by the report, that a reduction of duty is a reduction of price to the consumer, he will find that few families would save fifty dollars, the laborer, probably, not ten. But, on the other hand, would not this gain be more than overbalanced by the inevitable reduction in the price of his produce, resulting from the loss of a market which consumes, annually, \$100,000,000 of the products of the non-manufacturing States? Sir, where the western States would save one million, they would lose ten. But, I repeat it, it is not true that a diminution of the duty lowers the price. Reduce them so as to destroy domestic manufactures, and do you think that the British artisan, when relieved from American competition, will sell you his wares as cheaply as now? Will he not rather take advantage of his monopoly of the market, and compel you both to buy and to sell at his own price?

Attempts have been made to excite the jealousy of the South and West, by inflated statements in regard to the profits of the manufacturers. It has been proved, by calculations, omitting only the use of capital, wear and decay of machinery, fixtures, and buildings, taxes and insurance, and the numerous contingencies to which these establishments are pre-eminently liable, that the eastern manufacturers *must* have cleared not less than twenty or thirty per cent. per annum for a series of years. We have the best authority for saying, that the profits of the cotton manufacturers have for years not exceeded an average of six per cent.; and as to woollen mills, it is within my personal knowledge, that there is scarcely a woollen factory in New England, which has not lost a sum equal to its entire capital, since 1837. Under the tariff of 1842, these establishments can live, but they can never be a means of the rapid accumulation of wealth.

I wish to present another general consideration. I refer to the importance of domestic manufactures, as an essential element in a system of national independence and defence. Gentlemen need not to be told, that during the late war with Great Britain, the Government was forced to connive at an illicit trade with the enemy, as the only means of supply of such articles as neither Government nor people could live with-

out. Shall we again subject ourselves to the inconvenience and shame of smuggling from a hostile country the very blankets which cover our soldiers; and while slacking fire, that the smoke of our guns may clear away, shall we negotiate with the enemy for the purchase of powder?

I am sorry to say, Mr. Chairman, that I am not among those who discern in the signs of the times sure tokens of abiding peace. The age of conquest, it is said, has passed away; but at a moment when our own administration is meditating a war of conquest, and has already virtually declared hostilities in that unholy cause, it lies not in our mouths to say, that such wars are no longer possible. Sir, I have too much respect for the cool judgment of our statesmen, and too much confidence in the regard of our people for the principles of justice, and the integrity of the Union, to believe that they will assent to the consummation of a project, which, under the circumstances, can only be characterized as supremely unwise, and pre-eminently flagitious, and which must necessarily result, not in dissension, but in disruption. I do not therefore apprehend a conflict with Mexico, or its necessary corollary, an *immediate* war with England; but I cannot be blind to the fact, that we are in constant danger of a rupture with the most formidable power upon earth. Great Britain, sir, holds Canada on the North, her fleets command the Atlantic on the East; on the South, she has extensive possessions in the West Indies and on the continent; and she occupies, to say the least, an equivocal position on the West. But this is not all. Her ships are traversing every sea, and seizing upon every advantageous position, which is either unoccupied, or whose possessors are too feeble to resist her encroachments; and an American whaler can scarcely bring off a keg of water, or a boatload of cocoanuts, from a coral reef in the wide Pacific, without paying tribute to the outposts of England. I know, indeed, that she has disclaimed that atrocious outrage, the forcible seizure of the sovereignty of the Sandwich islands, but I have not yet heard, that she has hung, at the yardarm of his own ship, the piratical lordling who perpetrated it. Sir, I charge not Great Britain with cherishing dreams of widespread conquest, or aiming at universal empire: but he must be blind, who does not see that she is striving for no less a prize than the control of the commerce of the world. America too is ambitious. She disputes with England the sovereignty of the northeastern shore of the Pacific—we are rivals in the same branches of trade, and the red cross and the stars and stripes float side by side in every harbor of every sea. With all these points of contact, dare we hope that we shall always escape collision; and is it wise to doff our armor while our adversary is lacing his helmet?

Sir, on this subject let me not be misunderstood. No man can more cordially detest the practice, or deplore the necessity, of a resort to arms; none can more deeply abhor the hellish passions, the awful crimes, that constitute the very being of war, than myself; and I am not prepared to say, that any, or even all, of the pending or adjourned questions between us and Great Britain are worth a war. But, sir, I know that England is regarded with angry and inflammable jealousy along the whole frontier, and a small spark may at any moment kindle that tinder to an appalling flame. Thus situated, I hold it to be the part of wisdom to foster and strengthen our own domestic resources, rather than to cherish and reward the industry of the alien and the stranger. But I am wandering from the subject, and I will only pause to express my surprise, that gentlemen of the South, who dread the interference of England with Texan slavery, and fear the contagion of her example in her West India possessions, should yet advocate a policy,

which necessarily implies much more intimate relations with that formidable rival, and probable enemy. Destroy our manufactures, and subvert that revenue system which has, from our national infancy, been the soul of our finance, and we are at once practically reduced to a state of colonial dependence upon our ancient oppressor. Sir, it was not for this that our fathers fell at Bunker Hill, at Bennington, and at Saratoga, and that yours bit the dust in the hundred partizan conflicts which, at a later period of the war of independence, dyed your sands with the best blood of the South.

There is another point of far deeper, though less obvious, interest than the mere question of revenue, or the present pecuniary gain or loss to the consumer, and which is most worthy the profound consideration of the philosophical statesman. I refer to the influence of such manufactures as are carried on by machinery, upon the progress of mechanical improvement, and the consequent multiplication and diffusion of both the physical comforts and elegancies, and the higher refinements of life. The encouragement which inventive genius has received at the hands of the manufacturer, is the principal source of the astounding advances that half a century has witnessed in practical mechanics and manipulations, in the application of science to the arts, and even in the progress and dissemination of the physical sciences themselves.

The wants of the dyer, the bleacher, the sugar-refiner, have led to curious investigations and most important results in scientific analysis; the necessities of the machinist have prompted improvements in smelting, refining, casting, and forging metals, and to a better knowledge of their ores, constitution, and properties; the demands of British manufactures are the parent of improvements in mining, mineralogical research and geological science; to them we owe the invention of the reciprocating steam-engine, and the introduction of railroads, by means of all which, not only are all the operations of government immensely facilitated, but the conveniences of life are so multiplied and cheapened, that, as has been well said, the humble cottager enjoys more comforts than an emperor of Rome in the days of her greatest splendor. Knowledge, too, literally runs down the streets like a river. The power press sends forth its sheets by thousands in the hour, and books now cost less than did the paper on which they are printed within the memory of members of this House. These arts are emphatically the arts of peace; these are the true philosopher's stone, that turns all to gold; these are the means through whose aid alone the philanthropist can hope to level up suffering, depressed, and debased humanity. Machinery must supply the physical wants of the indigent; the power press must furnish the popular instructor with his textbooks—the missionary with his bibles.

To the improvements in the mechanic arts we have contributed our full share. We have then a proprietary, a paternal interest, in their prosperity. To them we, of all the nations of the earth, are most deeply indebted, and from them we have most to hope. Shall we lay the axe to the root of the tree which has borne such noble fruits, and which is still rich with the blossoms of future promise? What does not the South owe to the cotton gin and the power loom? and what would now be the condition of that mighty West, to which we have so often appealed, without canals, railroads, and steamboats, which derive both the motive and the means of their creation from the progress of manufactures? Sir, she would still remain a howling wilderness, inhabited only by savages and wolves and the game on which they prey.

Sir, let us have no more idle speculation upon the future consequences of the existing tariff. Let it be judged by its fruits. Show what evil it hath done. Prove that it has augmented the current price or diminished the supply of any foreign article of necessity or extensive use. Show that it has reduced the price or curtailed the sale of any important article of domestic production—but terrify us not with prophecies of future evil from the operation of that cause which has crowned the past and the present with abundant blessings.



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